

EMAIL GUIDELINES

E-mail allows people to communicate quickly and efficiently. It also encourages and stimulates flexible interaction; enhancing the exchange of information and helping people do their jobs better. However, because of its widespread use and ready availability, e-mail can also easily become subject to misuse and intentional abuse.

Departments should make all e-mail users aware of the following specific guidelines. Users must understand the potential liability and security risks associated with sending and receipt of e-mail. The following guidelines represent "best-practices" that will help to ensure appropriate use of e-mail so as to avoid exposing individual employees, the department and the city to undue risks.

State law, federal laws, regulations and legal decisions, City of Milwaukee Ordinances and Information Security Policies provide the basis for many of the following guidelines. Consequently, departments are strongly encouraged either to adopt the guidelines as written or to use the guidelines as the basis for developing department-specific policy statements.

- 1. AUTHORIZATION:** City department managers bear responsibility for authorizing access to e-mail resources for their employees. Departments should routinely review employee access privileges to determine if continued access to e-mail is consistent with the duties of and will enhance the productivity of the employee and whether the employee has used the resource effectively.
- 2. ACCESS:** Any authorized user connected to the city's Wide Area Network will receive e-mail privileges. These privileges enable the employee to use City equipment to send messages to and receive messages from addresses both inside and outside of city government. Employees who do not receive access to e-mail as part of their official duties may not, under any circumstances, use the e-mail account of another city employee to send or receive e-mail.
- 3. OFFICIAL USE:** The City of Milwaukee encourages its employees to use e-mail for work-related communications, to assist in providing services to citizens, and for any other activity that supports the city's mission. City departments may also choose to authorize limited incidental use of the city's computer resources for personal purposes as deemed appropriate. However, departments must ensure that such use does not impair the employee's ability to fulfill his or her job responsibilities and does not impose any additional costs or liabilities on the city. Under no circumstances should employees be permitted to use city equipment and e-mail systems for illegal activities, profit-making ventures or political endeavors.
- 4. VIRUSES:** In recent months e-mail attachments have become the most common method of spreading computer viruses. Employees must scan all incoming e-mail for viruses, regardless of whether they contain an attachment. Users should not open or attempt to read any file received as an attachment to e-mail unless specifically requested or received from a trustworthy source. Even then, the e-mail and its attached file should be scanned for viruses using reliable anti-virus software with up-to-date virus definitions.
- 5. LIABILITY:** Users must abide by all applicable laws, policies, and guidelines regarding the appropriate use of e-mail. Users may not send messages that can be construed as scandalous, defamatory, libelous, obscene, immoral or in violation of any intellectual property rights. E-mail users may not knowingly misrepresent themselves or their employment by the city; in messages

sent they must always identify themselves honestly, accurately, and completely

- 6. CITY PROPERTY:** All e-mail and/or Internet transmissions sent from or received through city computers (including any incidental personal messages either sent or received) are considered city property. City and departmental management reserve the right to examine, at any time and without prior notice, all e-mail, directories, files and other information stored on data disks, computers, and/or other media.
- 7. PUBLIC RECORD REQUESTS:** Any e-mail messages transmitted or received using city systems are subject to public records laws and any record keeping requirements that these laws entail. Requests from outside the city for access to electronic files should be handled through the same procedures as requests for any other public record. Thus, employees should not send out files containing city information without prior approval of the department manager.
- 8. PRIVACY:** Due to public records laws, and because e-mail administrators sometimes have no choice but to view messages in performing regular maintenance, users should not assume any privacy or confidentiality for any messages they transmit or receive via e-mail. Employees should choose a different mode of communication for sensitive or confidential matters.
- 9. SECURITY:** E-mail does not offer a secure medium for communicating information. Users should always consider that someone other than the intended recipient might read their messages; they can have no expectation of confidentiality. Even following deletion, e-mail messages can be successfully recovered from system backup files indefinitely. Therefore, users should never send confidential or sensitive information via e-mail.
- 10. BROADCAST MESSAGES:** Broadcast e-mail messages should be used judiciously to communicate within a City department or division or to all members of an interdepartmental work group and then only in support of city business.
- 11. FILE MAINTENANCE:** Users should file e-mail in electronic folders or print important messages for filing and delete unnecessary e-mail. Formal departmental communications should be maintained separately from informal messages.
- 12. RESPONSIBILITIES:** The City of Milwaukee trusts that its employees will act responsibly, and always in the best interests of the taxpayers who support them and the customers who depend on them. Each individual is responsible for complying with all applicable state and federal laws, and all City policies and standards when using the City's e-mail system. City departments will be held accountable for the actions of individual employees to ensure that conduct meets guidelines established for appropriate use of e-mail.

The city will establish any and all policies necessary and monitor operations to protect employees from creating legal liabilities and negative publicity for themselves and the city. Violations of any policies or standards can result in disciplinary action against the employee in accordance with local, state, and federal law and City administrative rules. Persistent abuse of e-mail by City employees can result in permanent revocation of e-mail privileges for the person or persons involved.